



Reasoning with Ethics

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A Project of The School for Ethical Education | www.ethicsed.org

Ethics in action creates character.

Use this blog to:

1. Lead class discussions in social studies, civics, ethics or advisory classes.
2. Teach students skills to analyze cases with core ethical values.
3. Recognize skills in support of SEE's Tri-Factor Model of ethical functioning.

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Do Not Resuscitate?

Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders are typically used for those too frail to benefit from CPR. Patients identified with a DNR will not receive the potentially life-saving CPR treatment that many laymen and all emergency medical workers can provide.



A report from The Guardian in Britain noted involuntary DNR orders have been issued for people with learning disabilities such as Down's syndrome during COVID.

This follows a public directive in Britain to "not prioritize" COVID vaccines for those with learning disabilities even though it is known that COVID is more lethal in that population. The Guardian cites Public Health England to say, "Younger people with learning disabilities aged 18 to 34 are 30 times more likely to die of COVID than others the same age."

Thus, two serious ethical issues exist for people with learning disabilities in Britain. SEE will focus on the involuntary DNR orders. The Guardian further reports a government spokesperson noted, "It is completely unacceptable for [DNR] decisions to be applied in a blanket fashion to any group of people."

SEE agrees and recognizes that issues in Britain and Europe often migrate across the Atlantic and land on US shores. In that anticipation, students are asked what would they do if they were in any position to offer CPR assistance and learned of an involuntary DNR order covering a venerable population of otherwise healthy patients? Would you violate the authority giving the DNR order if you knew it was involuntary? What core values would guide your choice of action?

Supplemental Links

The Guardian (2/13/21) Involuntary DNR orders for individuals with learning disabilities during COVID-- https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/feb/13/new-do-not-resuscitate-orders-imposed-on-covid-19-patients-with-learning-difficulties?_hsmi=113857238&_hsenc=p2ANqtz--LNyb5nvDPI95qHCgwEv-Q9aT65q4Ly3xOCKYdpKfn5MF_8EDntBeWr74apMVWzIDMXcORqBXZUtxJ5MkG6rkSW7_bdQ

The Guardian (12/2/20) Seniors with involuntary DNR orders-- https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/dec/03/do-not-resuscitate-orders-caused-potentially-avoidable-deaths-regulator-finds?_hsmi=113857238&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-8x0sd1KH0SOQghh5cB3vHV8t5RSbIAeqTdX--RtSrhgLNKD6k59UUm41QDogETTbcPL_H47yOFaONf5OzE8S-TuduRvg

BBC (2/24/21) Fighting for COVID vaccines for those with special needs --
https://www.bbc.com/news/health-56181154?_hsmi=113857238&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-_RivvzVXyMD3fTwBxgDsMnLB5wBj5Xin0lkgcMxt0JGrjFUnC7chujPovSLnQ1XLM-VBpPTJZGiMnDHW1H7zK6MAwYBQ